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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4977
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 6631
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 5552
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY 2093
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 0338
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY 1281
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 3829
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0751
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 2177
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0992
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0283
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001713

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/10/2031
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [SCUL](#) [SOCI](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: STUDENT-GOVERNMENT SHOWDOWN CONTINUES

REF: CARACAS 1627

CARACAS 00001713 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Robert Downes, Political Counselor,
for Reason 1.4(b).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) The dispute between university students and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (BRV) continues to fester. What started with violent protests at the University of the Andes (ULA) in Merida on May 24 over student union elections has devolved into a rhetorical war, waged mostly in the press. Student leaders Geyson Guzman and Nixon Moreno are the principal student leaders, with BRV support clearly behind Guzman. Moreno finds himself on the run, as authorities issued on June 5 a warrant for his arrest. END SUMMARY

WORDS, NOT BULLETS

¶2. (U) The Supreme Court's suspension of student elections at the University of the Andes (ULA) in Merida precipitated 48 hours of violence, during which disputed numbers of individuals were injured (reftel). The violence has subsided, but the war of the words rages on. Government officials continue to claim that "subversive" elements, led by ULA student union presidential challenger Nixon Moreno, fired upon National Guard and police forces. Moreno and other student leaders insist students were unarmed and were the victims of police aggression.

¶3. (C) Opposition daily El Universal ran interviews on June 5 with the two principal student adversaries, Nixon Moreno and Geyson Guzman. Guzman is the current BRV-backed president of the ULA chapter of the Federation of Student

Centers (FCU), at whose behest the elections were suspended. Moreno is a popular and charismatic student leader, who is a candidate to challenge Guzman's presidency. Student leaders told Emboffs on June 1 that the suspension of the elections is nothing more than a delaying tactic that will likely postpone them until after the national presidential elections in December, allowing Guzman to maintain his position for nearly a year longer than planned.

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NIXON: I AM NOT A CROOK (OR SUBVERSIVE ELEMENT)
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¶4. (C) Moreno subsequently held a press conference in Caracas, arguing the National Guard violated the university's autonomy and that the students did not have arms as the BRV alleges. Moreno has denied all the charges. Moreno has denied all charges against both the student movement in general, and against him personally, including allegations of his attempted rape of a policewoman. Authorities nonetheless issued an arrest warrant on June 5 for Moreno on charges of attempted murder and public intimidation, assault, and lascivious acts.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) The violence surrounding the question of student elections in Merida captured national headlines for a few days. Student leader Guzman has shown himself to be a true Bolivarian comrade. His tinkering with electoral rules to stay in power longer bring to mind Chavez's own machinations. The BRV response to the student uprising is characteristic of the BRV's demonization of the opposition and

CARACAS 00001713 002.2 OF 002

criminalization of dissent. The playing up of this issue is a deliberate BRV tactic. In this case, controversy suits the BRV's interests because it allows them to link the opposition to the outbreak of violence.

WHITAKER